



THE CITY OF BRUNSWICK MARYLAND

1 WEST POTOMAC STREET · BRUNSWICK, MARYLAND 21716 · (301) 834-7500

Distinguished Citizens biography for:

Cathy Barnes

Honored as a Distinguished Citizen in 2025

This brief biography might well be captioned “Brunswick Senior Center,” as more than half of Cathy Barnes’ life has been dedicated to the management of that important community service.

Cathy is a 4th generation Brunswickian. Both of her parents graduated from Brunswick High School. However, her father was teaching school in Howard County when she was born, and she spent her first two years there in the small community of Poplar Springs. Then her father, Paul Delphey Gaither, got a job teaching at Brunswick High School where he taught for 20 years and became affectionately known as “Coach.” Her mother, Betty Gaither, was well-known for her sewing abilities.



Cathy was the third of four children and the only girl in the family. The house Cathy was raised in had belonged to her great-grandparents (Walker) before her parents acquired it.

While at Brunswick High School, Cathy became involved with the Future Homemakers of America (FHA). She became a state officer, which led to her first airplane ride: to a convention in Dallas, Texas, at the age of 16.

During her junior year at Brunswick High School, Cathy met Greg Barnes, a senior who lived in Point of Rocks. There was a mutual attraction, and they got married in November 1975, five months after Cathy graduated. By this time, Greg was well-established in the construction business.

It wasn’t long before their first child, Greg, was born. Mandy wasn’t too far behind. So, Cathy’s attention was focused on raising her children while also doing day care for other children. She worked at the Learning Tree Day Care Center for three years, then in the Brunswick High School and Middle School cafeterias.

In 1990, Cathy was advised of an opening at the Brunswick Senior Center (now called “Brunswick 50+ Community Center”). She applied and got the job. This was part of a county-



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wide program which included other senior centers in Frederick, Emmitsburg, and Thurmont at the time. (Since then, Urbana and Middletown have been added, as well as a virtual program.) “We packed them in,” Cathy said as she reflected on her early days there. “And we depended heavily on volunteers to help with the various activities.”

In addition to the regular daily activities (card games, Bingo, and other interactive games), Cathy and her co-workers served meals at the Senior Center four days a week. They had a well-attended monthly dinner-dance at the American Legion and then at the Eagles Club. They were able to use the county van to take day trips throughout Maryland and other nearby states and to take the seniors shopping once a week. There were exercise classes twice a week at the City Park Building. They purchased equipment to get the pickle ball program started, which continues to be very popular.

Then came COVID. The Senior Center was closed for two years. Attempts were made to maintain connections using virtual technology, but it wasn’t the same. During those two years, several regular patrons were admitted to nursing homes, moved, or passed away, and now, three years later, the level of activity has not recovered. When Cathy was interviewed for this bio, there were only two patrons at the Senior Center.

However, Cathy was not going to hang it up and quit. The monthly dinner-dance was recently re-instituted and attended by about 70 seniors. Weekly activities include movie time music, fitness and dancing classes, crafts, games, nutrition programs, health programs, and, of course, bingo. The Center hosts numerous special events during the year thanks to the partnership with the city and the Eagles Club. A new Community Center is planned for Brunswick, which will include larger facilities for a Senior Center, and Cathy is optimistic that this will lead to increased participation in the senior programs that are available.

As far as her personal interests, Cathy enjoys crafts (especially crocheting and sewing, following in her mother’s footsteps) and tending to her flower garden. She also enjoys traveling, including frequent visits to Myrtle Beach, where her brother lives. She took her first trip abroad this spring (2025) to visit a friend in Scotland. In addition to their two children, the Barnes’s have three grandchildren.

The Mayor and Council and the Brunswick History Commission are proud to honor Cathy Barnes as a Distinguished Citizen of Brunswick, Maryland.